



Olfa Terras

Olfa Terras was born and grew up in Bizerte, Tunisia. After studying at lycée secondaire de Bizerte, she graduated from L'École Supérieure de Commerce de Tunis in 1997 with a degree in Finance. Fifteen years later, Olfa enrolled in the Sorbonne, Paris and obtained a public law degree.

Between 1997 and 2003, Olfa had a stellar career in the City of London as an analyst on the European derivatives desk at Deutsche Bank. She left banking in 2003 to care for her first of five children.

In 2011 Olfa founded the Rambourg Foundation that aims to empower young Tunisians to pursue access to education, arts, and culture. She is deeply convinced that enlightened and educated people, inspired by the spirit of creation and innovation, will lead Tunisia to greater prosperity and development.

Through the Foundation, Olfa created the first social business project in one of Tunisia's poorest regions utilizing local natural and human resources, such as agriculture and arts and crafts, to help transform this historic, forgotten area into a national asset.

In January 2017 Olfa announced that the Foundation was establishing a fellowship to support Tunisian students at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). The fellowship covers the full cost of attendance for one student each year over a period of five years. Dean Merit E. Janow welcomed the gift stating: "This will allow us to bring talented Tunisian young people to our campus and contribute to the future of the country."

Olfa sits on the London and Paris Committees of Human Rights Watch. As part of her engrained commitment to the organization, she was named a Council Ambassador for Tunisia. Her Foundation has been a primary benefactor of Human Rights Watch's country office since the 2011 "Arab Spring", which was initiated in Tunisia. Olfa maintains an ardent commitment to her fellow Tunisians in completing the transition from a perfidious dictatorship to a free, democratic country.

Olfa has traveled the globe interacting with business, government, and fellow civil society leaders garnering knowledge that will accrue to the benefit of her country. She, along with other Tunisians striving to maintain the gains of the "Arab Spring", founded civil society organization 3ich Tounsi (roughly translated as "Tunisians dreaming and striving towards a brighter future").

3ich Tounsi in 2019 embarked upon an unprecedented public consultation that resulted in 400,000 interviews. The outcome is a 12- point plan to address major challenges her country faces before the parliamentary and presidential elections in October and November, respectively.

Olfa is married with five children. Her native languages are Arabic and French, and she speaks fluent English and Italian. In her limited free time Olfa enjoys yoga and reading and has run the Chicago Marathon.

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I want Africa to be united, says philanthropist Olfa Terras

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Picture: Wesley Kemp/ African News Agency (ANA)

Cape Town - A grassroots citizen movement with political ambitions has been quietly garnering support as Tunisia prepares for elections later in 2019.

Its founder, Olfa Terras, has been driving its people-first philosophy, hearing from Tunisians themselves about what's wrong with their country and how they would like to go about fixing it. The movement, 3ich Tounsi - which in Tunisian Arabic translates roughly as "Tunisians dreaming and striving towards a brighter future" - has interviewed 400 000 citizens, something which has never been done in the country before.

"After Arab Spring in 2011, we emerged as a democracy," Terras said. "But a lot has changed. Our people are frustrated with the corruption within the government, they are tired of being worried about walking down the street in constant fear of being mugged. They want to send their children to school without being worried that the roof will collapse on them. These are the challenges we are facing. The cost of living has also become unbearable for most Tunisians."

Terras is a philanthropist who heads up the Rambourg Foundation, and her philanthropic nature shines through in everything she says and does. The people first, and all else after.

As the northernmost country in Africa, Tunisia has always traditionally looked north for its inspiration and help, she said.



Picture: Wesley Kemp/African News Agency (ANA)

"Being on the Mediterranean, we assume we are more part of Europe; we identify with Greece, or Italy, and of course there's the colonial French connection. But we are African. I would like for us to look towards our African brothers and sisters. We must stand together. We are part of this continent and we need to unite and learn from each other, and trade with each other," Terras said.

"Together, we are strong. We need to stand together. Stand together as citizens, but also as Africans. My detractors want to exploit the fact that my husband is French, and they say I am an agent wanting to re-institute colonialism by the French, that I am an agent of (French President Emmanuel) Macron. This couldn't be further from the truth," Terras said.



Picture: Wesley Kemp/ African News Agency (ANA)

It is for this reason that she visited South Africa, to connect Africa's northernmost country, Tunisia, and its southernmost.

"There is more that unites us than divides us," Terras said.

Standing atop Table Mountain, Terras said the next item on her movement's agenda is to go back to Tunisians with 3ich Tounsi's 12-point plan to address the major challenges her country faces.

"Now I'm here on top of Table Mountain, and it's so indicative of this idea that as Africans we must all see each other as on the same level. I want Africa to be united. I want Tunisia to take up its place among Africans because the time for Africa is now," Terras said.